



# QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2025/2026



# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Overview</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Improving Access &amp; Flow</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Advancing Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Indigenous Health</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>Patient/Provider Experience</b>	<b>Page 7-8</b>
<b>Safety</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Palliative Care</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>Population Health</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
<b>Emergency Return Visits</b>	<b>Page 12-13</b>

# Executive Overview

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At Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC), our commitment to excellence in patient care drives every initiative we undertake. As a small yet dynamic rural hospital, we embrace innovation to address challenges unique to our community. In 2024, the phrase “Here We Grow Again...” epitomizes our efforts to evolve and adapt amid increasing demands on our services. Rising capacity pressures and challenges in our Emergency Department (ED)—from packed waiting rooms to treatment delays—underscore the critical need for sustainable, patient-centered solutions.

To this end, ESHC introduced a pioneering Admission Discharge Unit (ADU) in January 2024. This initiative represents a transformative step toward improving patient flow, reducing wait times, and enhancing resource efficiency. The ADU serves as a dedicated transition point for patients awaiting admission or discharge, ensuring they receive focused care in a welcoming and safe environment. By fostering standardized operating practices and involving a dedicated care team, the ADU has not only streamlined hospital operations but has also elevated the experiences of patients and families alike.



One patient’s words capture the impact of this initiative: “Whoever came up with the idea of a separate unit for admitted and discharged patients is a genius. I was one of those waiting in the hallway during my last visit. Now, I can wait in a welcoming space with my family and friends.” This innovation reflects ESHC’s determination to deliver exceptional care, reinforcing our role as a trusted cornerstone of health in the community.

# ESHC will highlight the following Priority Indicators for the 2025/2026 QIP to include:







## Access & Flow

### Goal

Improve wait times and access to emergency services. Optimize patient flow. Enhance the overall accessibility of healthcare services.

### Objectives

Maintain ambulance offload time

Improve emergency department wait time to physician initial assessment

At Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC), our focus is to ensure timely, equitable access to care while optimizing the flow of patients across the hospital. In response to rising demand and capacity challenges, ESHC has prioritized the improvement of emergency service wait times, the enhancement of patient flow, and the overall accessibility of healthcare services for the community.

A key objective is to improve emergency department wait time to physician initial assessment for patients waiting in the Emergency Department (ED). By addressing this bottleneck, we aim to minimize delays that can lead to overcrowding and improve the continuity of care for patients transitioning to inpatient services. Complementing this effort, we have set a goal to maintain our ambulance offload time for patients entering the ED to focus on delivering timely care to those who need it most.

To achieve these goals, ESHC has implemented several targeted strategies. The recently established Admission Discharge Unit (ADU) is a pivotal part of this work, acting as a dedicated space to streamline transitions for patients awaiting admission or discharge. By alleviating pressures on the ED, the ADU not only creates capacity but also enhances the experience of care for patients and families.

In addition, ESHC is leveraging data-driven decision-making to monitor patient flow in real time, identify inefficiencies, and deploy resources more effectively. Collaborations with community partners, including primary care providers and home and community care services, are enabling better coordination of care, reducing unnecessary hospital visits, and ensuring patients can access the right care in the most appropriate setting.

These initiatives underscore ESHC's commitment to delivering accessible, patient-centered care while addressing the unique challenges of our rural community. By focusing on measurable improvements in ED wait times and patient flow, we are creating a more responsive and efficient healthcare system for those we serve.



# Advancing Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Indigenous Health

## Goal

Advancing equity, inclusion and diversity and addressing racism to reduce disparities in outcomes for patients, families, and providers

## Objective

Rollout relevant equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism education

Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC), advancing equity, inclusion, and diversity while addressing systemic racism is a cornerstone of our mission to reduce disparities and foster a high-quality, culturally safe health system. We recognize that achieving equitable outcomes for patients, families, and providers requires sustained and intentional efforts to embed these principles into every aspect of care delivery.

Building on the success of last year's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), ESHC achieved full participation from leadership and board members in gender diversity training. Additionally, we dedicated an entire day to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) education, laying the groundwork for continued learning and relationship-building. This year, we aim to advance these efforts by ensuring frontline complete relevant education in equity, diversity, inclusion, and antiracism.

ESHC continues to strengthen its relationship with the Caldwell First Nation, working collaboratively to embed Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into our organizational culture. A Caldwell partner now actively participates in our hospital-wide orientation, sharing lived experiences and education that establish the importance of equity, diversity, and Indigeneity from the outset. This includes developing e-learning modules, participating in research opportunities and offering one-on-one education sessions to deepen understanding and foster meaningful engagement across the organization.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to advancing cultural safety, supporting Indigenous health, and strengthening relationships with Indigenous communities in a respectful and collaborative manner.

Through these actions, ESHC is building a more inclusive, equitable, and responsive health system that serves all members of our community with dignity and respect.



# Patient Experience

## Goal

Enhance patient-centered care by addressing key concerns and fostering a welcoming and supportive environment.

## Objective

Increase patient satisfaction scores related to communication and care delivery

Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC) is committed to placing patients and their families at the center of all we do. By incorporating feedback from experience surveys and other input, we continuously refine our services to better meet the needs of those we serve.

A cornerstone of our patient-centered approach is our Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC). This year, we expanded the council to include 11 advisors, welcoming six new community members with diverse backgrounds and experiences. These advisors play a pivotal role in embedding community voices into ESHC's quality improvement plans, ensuring that our initiatives reflect the needs and perspectives of those we care for.

In response to patient feedback highlighting communication and care delivery as key concerns, ESHC will look to implement the Essential Care Partner (ECP) program. This initiative allows patients to designate a care partner who is directly involved in their care plan. By fostering better communication, enhancing discharge readiness, and addressing patient concerns, the ECP program aims to improve overall satisfaction and the quality of care.

Additionally, our Patient Family Liaison (PFL) team has been recognized through patient feedback for their positive impact on the care experience. Patients have noted the value of PFLs providing friendly greetings at the front entrance, assisting with navigation, and offering comfort items during long Emergency Department waits. These interactions help create a welcoming and supportive environment, even during challenging circumstances.

By leveraging patient feedback and prioritizing these initiatives, ESHC continues to enhance the care experience and build stronger connections.



## Provider Experience

### Goal

Foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture that supports staff well-being, collaboration, and professional growth.

### Objective

Improve frontline teams' satisfaction in annual engagement surveys and create pathways for staff involvement in developing programs and service.

Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC) is honored to be named a 2025 winner of Best Employer in the Southwest Region, reflecting our dedication to fostering a positive workplace culture. As a rural hospital, we prioritize innovative practices that enhance recruitment, retention, and staff experience.

Team-building exercises for frontline teams have strengthened connections across departments, fostering collaboration and camaraderie. To ensure work-life balance, we have implemented dashboards to transparently track staff vacation approvals, which are regularly reviewed at leadership meetings to promote fairness and timely responses.

ESHC also celebrates the contributions of staff to organizational achievements, such as the recent launch of Urology services. By involving frontline staff in program development, we empower our teams to actively shape care delivery. To support professional growth, we have created opportunities for nurses to engage in their passions, including research and education. Nurses have led research projects aligned with hospital priorities and contributed to educational initiatives that benefit colleagues and patients alike.

These efforts, combined with our ongoing commitment to inclusivity and wellness, have established ESHC as an employer of choice, building a resilient and engaged workforce dedicated to providing exceptional care Shore to Shore.





## Safety

At ESHC, we are committed to enhancing patient safety through a significant quality improvement initiative aimed at improving medication safety. In July 2024, we began transitioning from the Arixium medication administration machines to the advanced Pyxis system, with full implementation expected by mid 2025. The Pyxis system is a best practice model that supports safe medication practices through automated dispensing, barcode scanning, and real-time tracking to ensure accurate medication delivery and reduce errors. This transition is part of our broader effort to standardize and enhance medication administration across the organization.

As part of this initiative, we are also integrating the CII Safe system, an advanced feature of the Pyxis system that automatically tracks controlled substances, such as narcotics. This system removes the need for manual counts and significantly reduces the potential for medication errors or diversion, enhancing both safety and compliance. The CII Safe system provides real-time tracking and ensures that controlled substances are securely managed, contributing to a safer, more efficient medication administration process.

This project aligns with the principles outlined in Healthcare Excellence Canada's Rethinking Patient Safety report, focusing on leveraging technology to prevent harm and enhance safety. It also supports our participation in Ontario Health's Never Events Hospital Reporting initiative by reducing the likelihood of medication-related incidents supported by our current RL-6 reporting system. By adopting these systems, ESHC is fostering a culture of safety, promoting continuous improvement, and reinforcing our commitment to reducing patient safety incidents through advanced technology and streamlined processes.



## Palliative

At ESHC, we are dedicated to delivering high-quality palliative care through patient-centered, compassionate approaches. Here are the key initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to this goal:



### **Integrated Hospice Relationship for Education and Care Transitions:**

We have a strong partnership with local Hospice services, with a Hospice nurse embedded in our team. This nurse provides real-time education to patients, families and frontline teams about palliative care options and symptom management. The nurse also facilitates seamless transitions to hospice care or home based on patient preferences, ensuring timely, coordinated care in alignment with the Ontario Palliative Care Network's model.



### **Palliative Redesign of In-Patient Rooms**

We are redesigning two in-patient rooms with a palliative care-focused model to create a comfortable, supportive environment for patients and families. Redesign prioritizes comfort, dignity, and privacy, supporting both physical and emotional well-being. This initiative enhances patient safety by providing a safer, more accessible environment, and aligns with our organizational commitment to providing care in a setting that meets the needs of palliative patients.



### **Partnership with University and Social Work Students**

ESHC has partnered with a local university to integrate social work students into our care team. These students work alongside our Patient Experience Specialist, a social worker specializing in palliative care. This initiative expands our capacity to support patients and families with holistic, psychosocial care, ensuring comprehensive support through every stage of the palliative journey.

To further improve palliative care within ESHC, our Patient Experience Specialist offers legacy work, comfort carts with food, beverages, and resources, as well as psychosocial emotional support. These activities align with the Quality Standard for Palliative Care by promoting care coordination, patient, and family engagement, and ensuring a safe, supportive care environment.



## Population Health

Surrounded by the waters near Leamington, Ontario, the residents of Pelee Island face unique challenges in accessing reliable and accessible healthcare. Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC) has taken a leading role in addressing these population-based needs. On November 7, 2023, ESHC announced the expansion of healthcare services on Pelee Island, marking the launch of an innovative and collaborative approach to care.

This strategy leverages partnerships with Essex-Windsor EMS (EWEMS), the Erie Shores Family Health Team (ESFHT), The Hospice of Windsor Essex County, the Windsor-Essex Ontario Health Team (WEOHT), the Mobile Medical Support (MMS) unit (operated by ESHC in collaboration with WEOHT partners), Med Labs, and Kingsville IDA-Guardian Pharmacy. By fostering these partnerships, we combined specialized expertise and shared data to design a collaborative care model tailored to meet the needs of one of our region's most vulnerable communities.

ESHC has established a year-round clinic on the island, staffed by two part-time Registered Nurses (RNs), including night shift coverage. Additionally, the MMS Nurse Practitioner (NP) visits the clinic twice monthly during the peak season (April to December) and once monthly during the off-season (January to March) to address a full range of primary care needs. Preventative care is a core focus, aiming to enhance the overall quality of life, reduce 911 calls and off-island patient transports, and alleviate pressure on ESHC's Emergency Department.

Our mission remains steadfast: to provide comprehensive healthcare services to Pelee Island's residents, tourists, and agricultural workers, who are essential to the local economy.



## EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT RETURN VISIT QUALITY PROGRAM

At Erie Shores HealthCare, we identified the Patient Risk Profile as a key area for quality improvement. Our objective was to enhance the quality of care and mitigate risk issues for patients in the emergency department (ED) through a multifaceted approach, including ongoing education for our nurses.

To achieve this, we implemented regular competency assessments for ED nurses to ensure they maintained the necessary skills and knowledge. We provided targeted education to address knowledge gaps and enhance nursing skills. As part of this initiative, we conducted biweekly simulation scenarios in the ED throughout the year, covering various critical care situations.

In addition, all ED nurses achieved certifications in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS), the Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale (CTAS), and telemetry training. Furthermore, 12 registered nurses (RNs) completed the Trauma Nursing Core Course (TNCC). ED nurses also participated in several educational courses offered through Ontario Health.

Through these comprehensive educational efforts, we believe our nurses at ESHC are building a strong foundation to deliver excellent, critical care to our community.

Another quality initiative identified through our ED Return Visit audits was addressing Physician Cognitive Lapse. To address this, we set a goal to increase the number of ED physicians completing the emergency room certification program, provide cardiac-focused education, and encourage physician involvement with our regional trauma care network.

Currently, two of our ED physicians have completed the emergency room certification program. Additionally, all ED physicians were offered the opportunity to participate in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) courses, with several opting to complete the training. Our Chief Quality Officer actively represents Erie Shores HealthCare by attending regional trauma network meetings.

We remain committed to engaging our ED physicians in ongoing education to enhance their expertise and further improve patient care outcomes



## EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT RETURN VISIT QUALITY PROGRAM (CON'T)

To address the issues of physician cognitive lapse and discharge planning identified in this year's ED return visit audits, we are implementing targeted strategies to enhance clinical decision-making and improve patient transitions. Our aim is to ensure that ED physicians are equipped with the tools and knowledge needed to deliver consistent, high-quality care while optimizing discharge processes for all patients.

To address cognitive errors, we are prioritizing continuous education for ED physicians through targeted training sessions aimed at recognizing and mitigating cognitive biases. In addition, we will conduct regular multidisciplinary code simulations to enhance decision-making under pressure and strengthen team collaboration. Case reviews will provide valuable insights into specific instances of cognitive errors, fostering reflective learning and driving improvement. Regular performance monitoring—through audits and structured feedback sessions—will further support physicians by identifying opportunities for growth and reinforcing a culture of accountability and excellence.

On the discharge planning front, we are investing in staff education to enhance communication skills and equip our team with the tools to create clear, patient-centered discharge plans. Training will include strategies for managing transitions of care, especially for vulnerable populations such as older adults. We are also leveraging innovative digital technology to transform how discharge instructions are delivered. Personalized instructions, accessible through digital platforms, will ensure patients and caregivers fully understand their care plans, follow-up requirements, and warning signs. Collaboration with external and internal resources is key to our strategy. We are partnering with Ontario Health at Home care coordinators to ensure seamless post-discharge support for complex cases, including follow-up care, medication management, and home safety assessments. Our Geriatric Emergency Nurses will also play an integral role in creating tailored discharge plans for older adults, addressing critical factors such as mobility, medication, and community resources.

By integrating these strategies, we are confident in our ability to reduce cognitive lapses, improve discharge planning, and ultimately enhance patient outcomes and satisfaction in the Emergency Department at Erie Shores HealthCare.



# Contact Information

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**Kristin Kennedy, President & CEO**



**Phone :**  
519.995.7810



**Email:**  
[kristin.kennedy@eshc.org](mailto:kristin.kennedy@eshc.org)



**Neelu Sehgal, Chief Nursing Executive**



**Phone :**  
519.326.2373 ext 4046



**Email:**  
[neelu.sehgal@eshc.org](mailto:neelu.sehgal@eshc.org)



**Duffy Kniaziew, ESHC Board Chair**



**Phone :**  
519.796.1377



**Email:**  
[duffy@kniaziew.com](mailto:duffy@kniaziew.com)